**Higher price for sale of cement near plant areas**

633. SHR1 C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has come across cases wherein the cement manufacturers in the country are charging higher prices for the cement sold near the cement plant areas and for a lesser price at far off places despite the added burden of transport costs;

(b) if so, the names of the companies following such practices;

(c) the details thereof and the level of compliance by the companies; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, AND INDUSTRY (SHR1 ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) No, Sir. There may be variations in prices, including regional variations, due to variety of factors like demand and supply, distance from manufacturing centres, local taxes imposed by the State Governments etc.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

**Hike in tyre prices**

634. SHRIMATI VIPLOVE THAKUR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that prices of tyres of all kinds of vehicles have gone up since January this year;

(b) what are the reasons for increase in the prices of tyres when the price of natural rubber has registered a decline by 20 to 22% and excise duty has registered a decline of about 50% in the last three years; and

(c) whether Government has looked into the matter and if so, with what results?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) There has been a marginal rise in the prices of bus/truck tyres since February, 2008.

(b) The annual average price of natural rubber in the domestic market has increased from Rs. 60.68 per kg. in 2005 to Rs. 90.08 per kg. in 2007. There has been no reduction in the excise duty on tyres since 2005-06.

(c) Tyre is a de-licensed and de-reserved item. Tyre prices are determined by market forces. Government had reduced customs duty from 12.5% to 10% in 2007-08 to make imports of tyres cheaper and augment the supply of tyres.

**Decline in production of cashew**

635. SHRI K**.** CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the production of cashew in the country has been decreasing over the years;